

European community BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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BACKGROUND NOTE

EUROPEAN COAL AND STEEL COMMUNITY FIGHTS POLLUTION

Long before "the environment" became a popular issue, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was financing research to fight air pollution in the iron and steel industry. Between 1955 and 1972, the ECSC spent approximately 6 million units of account (one UA equals one 1970 dollar) to help finance about 70 technical research projects. These aids have covered between 10 per cent and 90 per cent of the cost of projects worth approximately UA 11 million.

The ECSC's antipollution efforts are made possible through a broad interpretation of the Paris Treaty which established the ECSC in 1952. Article 55 says the ECSC "must encourage technical and economic research concerning the production and development of consumption of coal and steel, as well as workers' safety in these industries....The results of the research financed...shall be placed at the disposal of all interested parties in the Community."

"Brown Smoke"

The ECSC's applied research program has laid particular emphasis on the problem of "brown smoke," produced in various steelmaking processes. Research has focused on "frying" and other means of developing efficient, economic means of collecting and cleansing smoke and other waste gases of steelmaking.

Other projects have aimed at detoxifying pollutants unavoidably produced in other manufacturing processes. Research on the decontamination of cyanogenetic dust, sludge, and effluent produced when cleansing gas furnaces is one example.

To control air pollutants, their frequency and density must be known. A first concern of ECSC research, therefore, has been to find ways to determine the extent of air pollution in and near iron and steel plants, notably by improving and harmonizing measurement techniques and equipment. Other research projects have tackled the problems of gas filtration, fluorine precipitation, and the diffusion of pollutants through factories on air currents caused by heat, wind, and ventilators.

"Black Lung"

ECSC research is not limited to air pollution. On the drawing boards is an entirely new applied research program that will include the treatment and disposal of industrial effluents and waste from iron and steel plants. A comprehensive program aims at eliminating the problem of "pollution transfers" and complements the ECSC's work in such related areas as the prevention and treatment of "black lung" disease.